BALLET TODAY

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Cussons - a lipstick to treasure

BALLET TODAY

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EDITORIAL COMMENT

URING 1948 there will be six issues of *Ballet Today*, which will, therefore, be appearing every ther month, commencing with January. As far as is ossible under present conditions we are trying to dhere to a publishing date of the tenth of each of the nonths in which the magazine will appear.

From all one hears, the European tour of Sadler's Vells Ballet this autumn was more in the nature of a riumphal procession. There is no doubt whatever hat they were an enormous success everywhere. The ompany were particularly moved by their reception n Warsaw and Posnan—towns unbelievably devastated, et ready to give a warm welcome to their visitors. t is a pity that the *Sunday Times* saw fit to publish an rticle indicating that difficulties were put in the way f the Company by the Polish Government, when in fact verything possible was done to make their stay a appy as well as a successful one. It is to be hoped that Miss de Valois' well-merited rebuke was as widely een as the original article, for the whole Company vere distressed and indignant that such statements hould have been made. On pages 11 and 12 we print few extracts from reviews which appeared in the Prague newspapers, together with an "audience eaction" account of the performances, which is of particular interest in view of the appearance earlier in he year of members of the Leningrad and Moscow allet companies. The preference for the Helpmann allets and *Dante Sonata* (as shown in this article, and lso in the press notices in general) indicates that the Central European influence is still strong in Czecho-lovakia, and that the theatrical rather than the purely alletic aspect finds a quicker response. On the other and, Warsaw, with its long ballet tradition, "went mad" over *Symphonic Variations*. Incidentally, it is ood news that Woizikovsky is well and still actively ngaged in keeping the ballet alive in Poland. Apparently is famed "ballet memory" is as phenomenal as ever. One of the features of the tour which greatly pleased he dancers was the attitude of the daily press which devoted considerable space to each of their performances, analysing them with particularity and care. This is in marked contrast to conditions here where the newsprint crisis cuts everything to the bone, and a couple of inches of space, which allows for no real criticism, is the most that can be expected.

News from Australia is of the great success of the Ballet Rambert when they opened in Melbourne on October 17th. Their *Giselle* impressed Australian critics and audience as much as it did our own. En route for Australia, Madame Rambert found time to give a talk on English Choreography to the ballet lovers of San Francisco, and from a letter received from one of those present on that occasion, she obviously "wowed" that ballet-minded town in no uncertain fashion.

On November 22nd Madame Adeline Genée celebrated the fiftieth anniversary of her first appearance in London. This was at the Empire Theatre, and seventeen years later (having come originally for six weeks), she made her farewell at the Coliseum. Of this occasion Mr. M. Montagu-Nathan writes in his "Scrap-Book for 1914", on the next page.

P. W. M.

NICOLAS ORLOV AS THE DRUMMER IN "GRADUATION BALL", THE OUTSTANDING SINGLE PERFORMANCE OF THE ORIGINAL BALLET RUSSE SEASON

Photograph by Duncan Melvin

SCRAP-BOOK FOR 1914

Turned by M. MONTAGU-NATHAN

IT'S rather fun having a private archives department. If it goes far enough back, for instance, you could perhaps extract from it, on a suitable occasion (say) the thoroughly mixed metaphors of a critic of the once-esteemed *Athenæum* who, of the then new *Tannhauser* overture, wrote:—

> "When it is stripped and sifted, Herr Wagner's creation may be likened, not to any real figure with its bone and muscle, but to a compound of one shapely feature with several tasteless fragments, smeared over with cement, but so flimsily that the paucity of good material is proved by the most superficial examination".

Or, on the other hand, you may discover, at the moment of the annual Stock Exchange walk to Brighton, a drawing by Rowlandson of Captain Barclay, who, on Newmarket Heath, in 1809, walked a thousand miles in a thousand successive hours and, still fit as a fiddle, joined the Walcheren Expedition a few days later as aide-de-camp to the Marquess of Huntley.

Well, as a really stunning example of a lucky dip the material now to be described would surely be hard to beat. A joint talk by a very eminent choreographer and a supremely distinguished balletomane had been announced in the *Radio Times*. A meticulously compiled archival index divulged that it might be worth while to consult MSB/517/61 (*b*), folio 3. And, would you believe it, and/or "believe it or not", this is what emerged. Cutting of full column from the *Observer*, dated June 17th, 1914. Here are the headlines:—

EIGHT NEW WORKS
SIR JOSEPH BEECHAM ON HIS GRAND SEASON
THE STRAUSS BALLET
WONDERFUL BOY DANCER of 17

And this is what follows:—

> "Sir Joseph Beecham . . . expressed the greatest satisfaction with the prospects of his ten weeks' grand season of Russian opera, German opera, and Russian ballet. . . . Already the demand for seats is enormous and there is a brilliant list of subscribers, headed by Prince and Princess Arthur of Connaught, with King Manoel, the Grand Duke Michael of Russia, the Princess Henry of Pless, Princess Hatzfeldt, the principal Ambassadors and Ministers, and well-known leaders of Society. . . ."

Having suitably disposed of novelties, such as the entire *Prince Igor*, of which hitherto only the Polovtsian dances had been seen here, and the opera-ballet *Coq d'Or*, in which, it was explained, the dancers just danced and the singers just sang—according, no doubt, to approved trade-union regulations—Sir Joseph continued:—

> "Of the four additions to the repertoire of the ballet the most important, of course, is *La Legende de Joseph*, which is the first ballet written by the great operatic composer, Dr. Richard Strauss. . . . Dr. Strauss is himself coming to London to conduct the first three performances. . . . At the rehearsal in Paris, on Thursday, he was perfectly delighted with the dancing of Leonide Massine in the title part. . . . His representative said he had never seen the composer so pleased. . . . Leonide Massine, a boy of seventeen years of age, of great strength and beauty, is a wonderful dancer and a very remarkable mime. One of his dances in the ballet occupies twelve minutes, and is a great test of physical endurance. For the role of Potiphar's wife, Mme. Ida Rubinstein has been engaged. We are giving seven performances. . . ."

In the words of the author of *Hans Breitmann*, where is that ballet now? As to the stripling of seventeen who has since learnt to talk English—though perhaps not quite up to B.B.C. standards of utterance—no such query arises. In the opinion of the writer of these lines he has since become as great an artist as ballet is ever likely to see.

Now, as everyone familiar with the technique of modern story-writing is aware, no plot is complete without a "twist". In this particular instance the provision of that indispensable feature has been simplicity itself. Its insertion has, in fact, come within that delectable category of "money for jam". All that was necessary was just to twist the *Observer* column of June, 1914, and then to peruse half a column on its other side. Here, once again, are some headlines:—

GENEE'S FAREWELL
DEMONSTRATION OF AFFECTION AND ENTHUSIASM

followed by:—

"Mlle. Genée's farewell at the Coliseum last night was made the occasion of a great demonstration of affection and enthusiasm. Never had this famous artist danced more delightedly or with greater charm than in the *divertissement* from *Robert le Diable*. That delicate movement on the tips of the toes in and out among the white-robed nuns standing in semi-circle was unforgettable. It was more like a fairy than a woman dancing.

(*Continued on page* 19)

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LIONS AND UNICORNS

By ALAN STOREY

"Does—the one—that wins—get the crown?" she asked, as well as she could, for the run was putting her quite out of breath.

"Dear me, no!" said the King. "What an idea!"

—"Through the Looking-Glass".

THE war between dancers and critics rarely ceases. Even in time of world crisis it persists in a semi-dormant condition, with occasional lapses into distant skirmishes, pockets of resistance, and minor mopping-up operations. The nature of the combat, like most theatrical affairs, is completely inconsequential and, apparently, without issue. One never fully realises, for instance, if one is engaged in fighting the enemy or one's colleagues.

The year began excitingly enough with M. Massine biting the tails of our character dancers. Now, almost simultaneously, we discover two V.I.P's, namely, Miss Ninette de Valois and Mr. Robert Helpmann, giving their views on criticism in general and critics in particular. The former, speaking at a meeting of the Critics' Circle, declared that, intellectually, Ballet has come of age now and deserves the same critical standards accorded to the other arts. Whilst tacitly confirming this, Mr. Helpmann goes a little further in suggesting that such critical standards should be established subject to the choreographer's approval.

"It seems to me", he writes★, "that if ballets are to be seriously and constructively analysed in books the writer must be prepared to check his facts by personal discussion with the choreographer, and allow him to see the proofs and suggest emendations before publication. The writer's opinion of the merits of a work is his own concern entirely, but the facts of creation and intention can be known only through the choreographer". And the object of Mr. Helpmann's rebuke? Miss Caryl Brahms, who, apart from stating her reasons for disapproving of *Adam Zero*, unfortunately decided that the audience shared them with her!

Now I agree that a single setting is not enough for the analytical criticism of a major ballet; but it *is* sufficient for the critic to hazard his opinion of the merits and demerits of such obvious factors as the theme and the choreographic design; the suitability or otherwise of the music, décor, etc., and the presence or absence of homogeneity and theatrical effectiveness —of which, possibly, the latter can be judged satisfactorily *only* from a first seeing. On the other hand, I am unable to believe that the critic's business is to concern himself with the state of a choreographer's subconscious mind during the creation of a ballet, or to bother his head over intentions not self-evident on the stage. The fact that Mr. Helpmann went to Dover-Wilson for ideas on *Hamlet*, to El Greco for the Stranger's hand movements in *Miracle of the Gorbals*, and to Jean-Paul Sartre for the philosophy (*sic*) of *Adam Zero*, though interesting in itself, is not of the slightest consequence in judging the final result. I am reminded of Mr. Agate's reflection, on reading that Mr. Eric Blom required two rehearsals, careful study of the score, a discussion with the composer and an actual performance, before making a judgment

★ "A Choreographer Speaks", in the March-April issue of *New Theatre*.

on a piece of contemporary music: "Suppose that before I could enjoy a play I had to attend two rehearsals and listen to a chat by Mr. Shakespeare or Mr. Ibsen!"

In regard to Miss de Valois' remark, it would appear that she had fallen into the common error of classifying all writers on Ballet as morons, "bobby-soxers", or illiterates. This is hardly fair to either the critics or the art; since, to adapt a remark of Mr. Eliot: "Every art gets the criticism it deserves". If this is true, then Ballet reached maturity some time ago! One recalls some of the giants who bothered their heads over the *batterie* and *glissades* of the past—MM. Noverre, Blasis and Stendhal. Was Gautier a moron? or Janin? or Thackeray? Could one, by any stretch of the imagination, describe Houssaye, Levinson and Svetlov as illiterates? And what of our own times? Do the names Beaumont, Martin, Kirstein, Zöete, Coton and Brahms bring any suggestion of "bobby-soxery" to mind? On the contrary, the intellects and imaginations of these people have, on occasion, risen higher than the artists they serve.

What is the function of a critic?

(*a*) To criticise. That is, or should be, obvious;

(*b*) To give his reasons for his reactions;

(*c*) To assist the public to discriminate between what is good and what is bad (by comparison, if need be); to heighten its sensibility and to guide its taste;

(*d*) The above being accepted, his judgment should be founded on two principles—observation of the thing being done, and

(*e*) The way it is done.

The essential fundamental equipment of a critic is simply an intuitive critical faculty. He may, in the course of time, acquire a wider technical knowledge and a more extensive theatrical experience based on recollection, comparison, etc.; but unless he instinctively knows good from the indifferent or the bad, unless he can discriminate between the rare inner rapture and contagious mass excitement, unless he possesses complete detachment, he is not a fit critic.

The art of criticism is neither a game nor a mathematical exercise, though it embraces the qualities of each. Consider for a moment my first point: *The function of a critic is to criticise.* It is almost useless for a critic to state his likes and dislikes unless, by definition, he first acquaints his readers with his accepted standards of creation and interpretation. This means, in the case of the ballet critic, definition of the thing, "Ballet". Before attempting to examine the nature of a performance he must answer the question: Is this a ballet according to my definition of the word? Does it, in effect, develop a theme or mood, or is it a *divertissement*? If the latter, then it should be judged as such. That is, as choreography (its plastic quality), décor, etc., and the relationship between music and dance. It appears to me that here choreographers have a legitimate grievance, but let Lifar represent them. "How many of the critics who write articles on a ballet really grapple with the choreographic part of the performance which they discuss? In the majority of cases a ballet is approved according to the value or otherwise of its musical score: if, on the contrary, the score is weak or dull, the choreography will be immediately classed as mediocre. Next, the settings are assessed and, last of all, the dancers' interpretation . . . whosoever styles himself a ballet-critic must be able to appraise and analyse the art of dancing in its pattern, mastery and technique". The critic must avoid these errors; his first consideration is for the quality of the choreography—is it, for instance, original or derivative? Next, does it have *style* (i.e. style of nationality, as in *Schéhérazade*; of plastic unity; of period, as in *Façade* and *The Rake's Progress*; or of subject, as in *Les Patineurs* and *Pillar of Fire*)? Ted Shawn makes some pertinent remarks on this most important subject in *Dance We Must*: "A dancer", he writes, "may choose to do a dance in the style of the hieratic wall paintings of ancient Crete or in the style of a Javanese dance or a Spanish dance. In this case, this style must predominate, govern and discipline every movement and even the dance as a whole". He refers to the solo dancer—but it applies equally to choreography. Nothing is more annoying than inconsistency of style; unfortunately it is a bad habit to which most of our young choreographers are prone.

In a ballet, or to give it a definite name—*Ballet Pantomime*—our observations on *divertissement* are equally relevant. In this type of ballet, however, the critic must bear Noverre's dictum in mind, that dramatic value must be present in every movement—just as every shot in a film should have value, whether it be of atmosphere, action or character. For here lies the superiority of the ballet *Hamlet* over *Miracle in the Gorbals* and *Adam Zero*. Once more the critic should remember the golden rule that the essential element of Ballet should be THE DANCE. "Everything that I can express I express in dancing", Lifar declares, "rejecting all means which are not the appanage of my art; preferring to abstain rather than to cheat, rather than replace one art by another, to use in dancing effects contrary to dancing". Would that some of our choreographers, and their supporters, took this to heart!

The above are merely preliminary suggestions as to the precise function of the critic. The assessment of classical interpretations which, I admit, is rapidly deteriorating; and the approach to that most burning of topics—the didactic value of the new "intellectual" ballet—requires an amplification which space forbids. Enough is enough; it is time to drop out for a piece of plum-cake.

GEORGES BALANCHINE AT THE PARIS OPERA

By FERDINAND REYNA

AFTER the estrangement of Serge Lifar and the departure of several of the finest elements of the Opera, such as Roland Petit, Solange Schwarz and Serge Peretti, the Corps de Ballet had, by force of circumstances, to reconstruct its framework. The ascent of several new young dancers demanded a choreographer of worth, capable of putting them to the proof.

By a happy stroke of initiative M. Georges Hirsch, director of the Opera, called in Georges Balanchine from America, together with the great star Tamara Toumanova, and that excellent dancer Maria Tallchief (Madame Balanchine).

In Paris Georges Balanchine has presented three ballets created in New York: *Serenade*, with music by Tchaikovsky, *Baiser de la Fée* (Stravinsky) and a revival of *Apollo*, together with a new creation, *Le Palais de Cristal*, based on the four movements of the classical symphony composed in his youth by Georges Bizet.

Le Palais de Cristal has neither "book" nor argument. One knows that Georges Balanchine willingly dispenses with scenario, story and subject in the conception of his stripped and often abstract art. This ballet is a rapidly moving, brilliant work, with a development which is both pure and clear.

Here are the dancers themselves, clad in tutus of rose, green, black or red, suggesting who knows what fabulous gems; diamonds, rubies, emeralds. The fantastic décor in the baroque mode of the seventeenth century, by the Italian painter Léonor Fini, skilfully suggests Spain, as do the costumes.

In the first scene of this ballet appears the emeralds, led by Mlles. Darsonval, Moreau and Bourgeois. This last-named is remarkable for the precision and sustained grace of her *attitudes*. The adagio of the second movement belongs to the black tutus, amongst whom Mlle. Tamara Toumanova shines above all, with a strange mysterious lustre. Mlle. Bardin and the

TOUMANOVA AND KALIOUJNY IN "BAISER DE LA FÉE"
Photograph by Lipnitzki

VAUSSARD AND BOZZONI IN "SERENADE"
Photograph by Lipnitzki

Photograph by Lipnitzki

"LE PALAIS DE CRISTAL", WITH LAFON AND BOZZONI, DARSONVAL AND KALIOUJNY, TOUMANOVA AND RITZ

youthful Renault give impulsion to the third movement in a highly successful *pas de deux*. In the turbulent finale (allegro), which brings the whole company on to the stage, Mlle. Madeleine Lafon makes a deep impression, all the more noteworthy because she appears last, after the big stars with their more brilliant *pas*.

In *Baiser de la Fée* several of the unique qualities of Balanchine choreography are brought together, notably the burlesque of the peasant dance in the second scene and the profound lyricism, in spite of its abstraction, of the third scene, when the fairy comes to steal the young man away from his beloved *fiancée*. As the pure, sacrificed girl, Tamara Toumanova employs all the resources of her immense talent, well supported by Alexandre Kalioujny, who reveals himself more and more every day as a dancer of great style. Mme. Tallchief (the fairy) and the whole *corps de ballet* were recalled again and again at the end of each performance.

The décors by Alice Halicka have a rare and refreshing grace, particularly in the play of colours at the peasant fête and in the evocation of the lake, in the waters of which struggle and disappear those who are captured by the kiss of the fairy.

Serenade is danced in front of a décor of transparent gauze, simply draped with a few white supports. The depth of the stage stretches into infinity. The Costumes are tender blue, green or pastel rose. The dancers themselves seem to sing the eternal song of youth, by turns gay, melancholy, amorous or sad. They are symbolical of the sportiveness, the purity, unhappiness and love which give life to their drama. The choreography, at first precise and clear-cut, grows progressively into rapid, sweeping movement, cut across by *attitudes* and plastic poses. In this ballet also the motive is suggested little by little by the unfolding of the action as the dancers intervene, as though all is happening as it might in the dream of a young girl. It is a most subtle work, of a science sure, and of an art pure and very ascetic.

The public as well as the Parisian critics have welcomed the presentation of these works. The presence of Georges Balanchine at the Opera has been rich in results, and the season showed above all the masterly choreography and the discipline of the whole *corps de ballet* which has so well served these ideas and conceptions.

WANTED.—*Ballet Today*, Nos. 1 and 2. Also *Ballet in Action*, by Severn.—Box No. 21.

"LES SYLPHIDES"

By JANET SINCLAIR

TO most people, whether they are hardened and aged balletomanes or newcomers to the art, whether they date from Diaghilev, de Basil or de Valois, if they have been to the ballet three times or three hundred or three thousand, even if they have never been at all, *Les Sylphides* equals ballet, and ballet equals *Les Sylphides*. Whether it is the long white skirts, or the Chopin music, or what it is, nobody quite knows; but the fact remains that every novice taken to the ballet for the first time sighs with disillusionment if the first thing he sets eyes on is *Concurrence* or *Jeux d'Enfants* or *Les Cent Baisers* or *The Rake's Progress* or *Comus* or *Assembly Ball*. "But I thought they wore long white frocks?" he laments; "it's not nearly as pretty as I imagined!"

Sit him down, however, to an orchestra about to play Chopin's Prelude No. 7 and, as the curtain rises —always allowing, as I have presumed, that he is a person of sensibility—he is at once drowned in a world of delight. This is ballet as he has always visualised it; let the cast be merely adequate, and a convert is made.

To the more or less mature ballet-goer, a moment of satiation with *Les Sylphides* is often reached. This is chiefly owing to the maddening habit of any and every ballet company to consider themselves able, and indeed obliged, to put on this ballet on any and every occasion, whether they command a cast and *corps de ballet* worthy of it or not. One can visualise the "artistic director" of such a company thinking: "Oh, we can shove on *Sylphides* to open with", and then proceeding to put the words into literal effect. However, with perseverance and the avoidance of the more horrible manifestations of this attitude, the ballet-goer will regain his lost Paradise and find that this is still the most perfect of all ballets—more, his previous blasé and contemptuous attitude will melt like snow, and in reverse he will look with scorn not upon those who "still like dreary old *Sylphides*" but upon those who affect to despise it.

An attitude of condescension towards what may perhaps prove the immortal work of this half-century is common not only to a percentage of the audience (who, after all, have it thrust upon them a little too often) but also to the directors of many ballet companies, who seem to look on it as the most useful ballet with which to fob off those dancers who, after all, are on the pay roll and therefore have to have something to do. This is often the case with the Waltz, where the most unsuitable people appear night after night and go through the steps with as much musicality and imagination as a young she-elephant. It was not for nothing that Diaghilev cast Pavlova, Karsavina, Nijinsky and such artists in these most difficult of all roles. Nowadays the artistic director of a company and too large a proportion of the dancers appear to look on the ballet as a curtain-raiser and nothing else, a series of technical exercises that any dancer capable of getting up on *pointe* can perform to the entire satisfaction of all concerned.

To those dancers who are also artists, however, *Sylphides* is much more than that. To them, as to us, it is the loveliest of dreams and the most difficult to realise. The steps themselves contain nothing one-half as exacting as those with which the average modern ballet (genre "symphonic") is filled, and, as in all arts, the pureness and simplicity of the movement is a trap for the inartistic and the badly trained, revealing every fault, mannerism and affectation. Real artists know just how difficult this simplicity is to achieve, and how satisfying when it is achieved: a good *Sylphides* is the goal of most artistic classical dancers, and the pity is it is not left to them, to the exclusion of the technicians, soubrettes, character dancers and riff-raff that so often clutter it today.

The three leading female dancers (originally Fokine used four, but today it is common to double the woman's Mazurka with the *pas de deux* Waltz) need not be identical in height and shape, but the perfection of the ballet is marred if the dancers of the Mazurka and the Waltz are of different heights as this unbalances the conclusion of the first Nocturne. The Mazurka dancer needs to be possessed of lightness, excessively beautiful and subtle arms, and a good jump; the Waltz, of great flow and musicality; the Prelude, of intelligent phrasing, and that other-worldliness which illuminates all Sylphides, but this above the others as she always dances alone. The male role presents an almost insuperable problem and is nearly always ineffective. The dancer who is not very careful, and who determines that the grace of the ballet is of more importance than anything else, too often calls down unpleasant epithets upon his (occasionally quite innocent) head. The dancer who determines to avoid creating this unfortunate impression and who dances the part with resolute air and bulging muscles is a shade less unsuitable, but only a shade. The good technician without brains is merely dull. To succeed in *Les Sylphides* the male dancer must have something to put into it, as Lifar had ten years ago—but Lifar was

immeasurably helped by his own exotic, faun-like personality; the average English male dancer has nothing exotic about him, or, if he has, it is usually unsympathetic. If he can put something positive, a romantic essence of his own personality, into the role, then he will succeed. Beside Lifar, I have seen three male dancers only who succeeded completely in this role, and perhaps half a dozen others who were very good, and no more.

It is obvious, therefore, that there is more to *Les Sylphides* than would appear to the naked eye of the happy initiate. No dancer can "get away with" her deficiencies in this ballet by putting in a few double *fouettés*, or standing on *pointe* in arabesque for five or six seconds, by exciting the audience so that they don't notice she has affected hands or bent knees, or bad breathing, or weak ankles, or no sense of music. Here the very spirit of ballet is pinned out and displayed, and concentrated into something very near magic—if it comes off.

How many hundreds of *Sylphides* have I sat through and been very pleased with if two or three of the soloists have been really suited to the ballet and given a good performance? I don't know. I lost count years ago. Sometimes one soloist will stand out from an ocean of mediocrity (Lifar at the Paris Opéra in 1937) and almost make one forget the dreariness of the rest; occasionally one dancer will be so atrociously bad one will shut one's eyes so as not to spoil the rest of the ballet; once in a decade one sees a performance to remember all one's life (Danilova in the Mazurka and the *pas de deux*); but all too often one or more of the soloists is just not up to it. It is almost possible to know beforehand whether anyone will be able to dance well in this ballet or not. Fonteyn is the obvious example of the ideal *Sylphides* with her musicality and her soft, dreamy movement, and one has no doubt that she would phrase the Waltz as flawlessly as she does the Prelude and the Mazurka. If one has to choose between the dancer with the perfect technique or the dancer with the spirit of *Sylphides* one would choose the latter. For example, June Brae, whose technique is nowhere as strong as that of many other leading dancers, dances one of the loveliest Preludes I have ever seen (the others are Theilade, Riabouchinska, Fonteyn and Franca) because she has the instinctive sensibility that tells her what to do, she can phrase her dancing to fit into the lovely halting dip and rise of Chopin's melody instead of dancing maddeningly at cross purposes with it. By converse, Sonia Arova, an intelligent dancer with a real virtuoso technique, is out of her depth in the Mazurka: she dances well but that is all, the poetry is not there; and in the same performance Edith Ecker, who is far behind Arova technically, walked away with the ballet because she could feel the mood of the music and the steps and express what she felt with the whole of her body. It is what is inside the dancer that comes out in *Sylphides* and nothing else. Baronova, the ideal "symphonic" dancer, with technique hard and finished as a diamond, was lost; she did not know what the ballet was about (and Baronova is a very considerable artist in her own line).

Poetically simple romanticism—that is the breath and the spirit of *Sylphides*, and if the dancer does not understand that then it is a waste of his or her time to attempt it. As the choreography grows out of the music, so must the dancer let the movement grow from the sounds that the orchestra conveys to the ear. The ballet opens with the unfolding wings of the *corps de ballet*, and almost with its first moment it is possible to tell whether it will be a good performance; as it progresses one holds one's breath, scarcely daring to breathe or to move lest something happen—a dancer stumble, lose for a moment the continuity of thought, the orchestra muddle a phrase, the *corps* hurry through the exquisite extension of their movement, some insensitive member of the audience shiver the veil by banging his silly hands together at the conclusion of one of the dances—but no, the miracle happens, the mood endures, the dancers move raptly and intently to their conclusion: and one is born again, one has undergone that rarest and most breath-taking of all balletic experiences, a perfect *Sylphides*. Even in acknowledging the applause at the fall of the curtain the dancers appear still serious, unsmiling, dedicated, lost in their own world.

Away with this superstition that *Les Sylphides* is a curtain raiser, and a *divertissement* worthy only of second-class dancers. It is one of the highest expressions of living art, and it should be attempted with reverence.

Ram Gopal and his company of Indian dancers began a three weeks' season at the Prince's Theatre, London, on Monday, November 24th.

Messrs. Isaac Pitman announce for New Year publication an important new work, *Approach to Ballet*, by A. H. Franks. A review will appear in the January issue of *Ballet Today*.

The Angus McBean photograph on the cover is of "Valses Nobles et Sentimentales", by Sadler's Wells Theatre Ballet.

SADLER'S WELLS BALLET IN PRAGUE

THE following are representative of the general trend of the press notices, and to consolidate these impressions we also print a letter from a Prague ballet lover who saw every performance and writes of public reaction to each of the ballets presented, as well as giving a comparison of the impression created by Sadler's Wells after the previous appearance of a company from the Soviet.

"After the first night's performance on Monday, September 15th, 1947, we can say that we witnessed a great artistic event and that we learned a great deal. The English have created in Sadler's Wells a ballet company worthy of their tradition and in harmony with their national feelings." *Pravo Lidu.*

"The English dancers with their perfect technique, amazing discipline, yet complete absence of affectedness, who under all conditions are always elegant and tasteful, are wonderful material for a choreographer".

"If, after seeing the eight ballets which were given by the English company, we want to express an opinion of the general value as well as of each separate show, we shall not be far from the truth by stating that just as in music and literature the creation of new, positive and unquestionable values is extremely hard, great achievements here also are rare and difficult to accomplish. The existence of possibilities in this field was clearly proved by ballets such as *The Rake's Progress*, *Sante Sonata* and *Hamlet*. The other ballets which we saw only bore out that revolutionary new values cannot be created any longer from the academic form of dancing. The English could not achieve it and, in fact, neither could the Russians. Therefore only the three aforementioned ballets can be considered to be feats of discovery and milestones showing the way; but we are extremely grateful to our dear guests also for the performance of the other ballets, because in these they showed the qualities essential to every really outstanding ballet company, i.e. purely technical skill of the trade' and collective discipline".

Svobodné Slovo.

"The performances of the Sadler's Wells Ballet made a valuable contribution to the development of our own dancing. Perhaps this did not consist so much in their mastery of dancing as in the causal connections of their creations, methods, style and choice of repertoire. Fundamentally the strength of the ballet lies in the excellent material, i.e. technically highly skilled dancers to whom the mastery of classical technique is an obvious necessity. This is an impressive proof of the whole educational system and of the daily hard training."

"If we had a few comments to make on the first performance, this time we are completely disarmed. Familiarity with the stage and atmosphere gave still more self-assurance and concentration to the dancers, who completely upset the theory that the English are cold. A performance danced with such fire and enthusiasm is not often seen. Technical perfection and aplomb are the assets which they use in the execution of their ballet roles . . . Summing up, we can say that not only were we not disappointed by the English but they surpassed by far our highest expectations."

Lidová Demokracie.

Praha, September 22nd.

Tomorrow morning an early train will be taking the Sadler's Wells Ballet from here to Warsaw. Tonight we saw the last performance in one of the most successful weeks of ballet ever held in Prague. And so, before the memory of any of these fine performances begins to fade from our memories, let me write to tell you in England about this week.

PAMELA MAY AND MARGOT FONTEYN IN PRAGUE HAVE A PRESS NOTICE TRANSLATED FOR THEM

As you know, your ballet is the third major foreign ballet company to visit Prague this year. Earlier in the year we saw the classical company from the Bolshoi Theatre, Moscow, and then the folk-dance group under Moïseyev, also from Moscow. In consequence we rather naturally tend to compare the Sadler's Wells Ballet with these two preceding companies. So let me say from the start that of these three companies there is one that stands out because it is universally acclaimed as being of a quality not approached by the other two. I refer to the Moïseyev troupe. This company, with its repertoire of folk dances choreographed into ballets, gave us performances of such breath-taking technical virtuosity, choreographic invention and artistic feeling, that the emotional impact on the audiences was so powerful that all other ballet performances pale beside them.

Therefore, in this article, I shall consider only the two classical companies; but to do so most profitably for you I shall attempt to give a true cross-section of opinion here about the two companies. This cross-section tries to represent a *précis* of the verbal criticisms expressed by dancers, critics and the informed public here, and supplements the actual reviews which appeared in the newspapers.

First, the repertoires of the two companies. The Moscow Ballet did only one full-scale ballet—the third act of *The Fountain of Bakchiserai*; the remainder of their programmes consisted of several *pas de duex*. The reason for this was partly due to the fact that the ballet was only one item in the International Youth Congress held here during the summer. The Sadler's Wells repertoire included *The Rake's Progress*, *Swan Lake*, *Act* 2, *Dante Sonata* (these three comprising the programme for the first night), *Hamlet*, *Miracle in the Gorbals*, *Nocturne*, *Symphonic Variations* and *Les Patineurs*; on some occasions the *grand pas de deux* from *The Sleeping Princess* was also given.

So it will be seen that no very detailed comparisons can be made between the two companies, which is, perhaps, just as well, because it is usually invidious to compare two different works of art. But saying that only avoids the question which you are sure to ask, namely—"What showing did the Sadler's Wells Company make in Prague?" So, with the reservations necessary in view of what I have just said, here are some very general comparisons.

The strongest asset of the English company was the variety and inventiveness of the choreography of the ballets shown; whereas the Moscow company appears to have retained the choreographic vocabulary and grammar in use twenty-five years ago and more, with all its limitations and absurdities. As a contrast, the Sadler's Wells Ballet gave us *The Rake's Progress*, *Dante Sonata* and *Miracle in the Gorbals*. This last seems to have been the most generally popular ballet of those given in Prague, not for any reason of social significance but simply because it is "good theatre". The Czech people are above all very "theatre conscious", and so this ballet with its distinct characterisation and dramatic moments found the greatest response amongst our audiences. But where so much thought has obviously been given to the presentation and characterisation of a ballet it is odd to notice the apathy displayed by the dancers to such moments of drama as when the drowned girl comes to life and starts to dance. Instead of utter amazement in the faces of the onlookers at such a phenomenon the two lines of kneeling figures seemed, with one exception, almost to be bored by what was going on. In fact, although the title is *Miracle in the Gorbals*, the spectators seem to regard the "miracle" as an everyday occurrence.

This brings me to another criticism voiced by some of the most experienced critics here. They were struck by the coldness or reserve evident in some ballets, in particular in the fully classical ballet, *Swan Lake*. Although the dancing in this ballet was adequate, with the *pas de quatre* of the cygnets noticeably well done, and although Margot Fonteyn's *Swan Princess* had a majesty and technical finish which were beyond reproach, yet the general effect was too "cold", leading even to an effect of dullness.

On the other hand, *Dante Sonata* obviously had real meaning for the dancers because they danced it with an enthusiasm and vitality which made it exciting to watch. Choreographically it was very interesting for us, as it was our first opportunity of seeing how the purely classical choreographers, such as Ashton, had developed their idiom during the last few years.

We had heard a great deal in advance about *Symphonic Variarions* by the same choreographer. From reviews of it in the English dance-press it is obviously considered one of the finest works of the Sadler's Wells repertoire; therefore I do not wish to say too much in criticism, except that it was not as popular here as it apparently was in London. Our critics found it dull, as (to quote one of the more erudite of them), "During the whole ballet nothing of interest happened. There were no new or particularly inventive movements or groups, and the movements used seemed to have no significance or meaning. In short this ballet was little more than an exhibition of 'training'." * But the settings and costumes were universally admired.

Among dancers and critics the ballet which seems to have been most popular, together with *Miracle in the Gorbals* and *Dante Sonata*, was *Hamlet*. The many, and sometimes rather obscure references to the play were not lost on the audience, and many moments contained the most exciting dramatic effects, as for example Hamlet's confusion as to whether he is seeing the Queen or Ophelia, and where the body of Ophelia is carried right over Hamlet. But the style of the backcloth for

* *Class work.*—Ed.

(*Continued on page* 23)

THE PAST YEAR IN RUSSIA

By ELENA ROSLAVLEVA

ONE thought the ballet season had reached its climax during the Moscow Conference of Foreign Ministers. Indeed never was there such a variety of ballets and talents, and such excellent standards of the entire performance as a whole from the first to the last curtain drop. Many delegates became initiated to the ballet and never missed a single "ballet Wednesday". The important people could not come on week-days, being too busy, but the best ballerinas danced at the Bolshoi Sunday matinées for their benefit. One envied those who were seeing all this for the first time and had a fresh reaction. But we "old-timers" had a chance once more to check our own impressions and find many new sidelights.

Romeo and Juliet was seen for the *n*th time, and suddenly one started noticing absolute gems which had passed unobserved at the first performances, when the attention was naturally concentrated on the chief characters. After Mercutio has been killed and the tense, dramatic scene of vengeance proceeds on the unlit public square, two dirty Italian urchins (who had been mixing with the crowd since the first act) continue playing with his bright little red cap which had rolled into a corner, ignorant of what is going on around them and thus emphasising the terrible cruelty of Mercutio's death. There are many other similar *mise en scènes* bearing the stamp of Lavrovsky's talent not merely as choreographer but as director. At the same time the Conference performances helped one to check on previously discovered faults and to find new ones. I was rather amused when a bewildered young Englishman in my box said to me, after having sat through half an hour of the gorgeous ball scene lavishly decorated by Peter Williams, who did not spare gold brocade and purple mantles: "But surely Romeo and Juliet meet for the first time somewhere here?"

The revival, or rather première, of *Flame of Paris* also took place during the same period. It is a very significant work as far as the whole history of Soviet Ballet is concerned, and Yuri Slonimsky has given it a deserved prominence in one of the chapters of his new book on the History of Soviet Ballet, published in connection with the thirtieth anniversary of the Revolution. First shown for the November Revolution celebrations in 1932, the famous "Ça Ira" scene from this ballet remained a classical achievement of *danse d'action* in Soviet Ballet. Everything was a novelty then—the treatment of the mass as one whole, the fusion of music, dance and singing introduced for the first time in ballet. Vassily Vainonen, the Leningrad choreographer, had produced a wonderful piece of choreography, aided considerably by the "book" written by the leading Societ ballet dramaturgist, Nicolai Volkov. Boris Asafiev, the venerable Soviet composer and historian of music, unearthed many authentic French tunes and dances which he wove into the score of the ballet, and Vainonen's "Basque Dance", particularly as done by Nadezhda Kapustina of the Moscow Bolshoi, is an example of how character dancing should be combined with acting without the danger of falling into mime.

In the revived production the British guests were charmed by the Court scene with its finely done Sarabande and a little classical ballet in the eighteenth century fashion. Alexei Bulgakov, who had moved the audience so much in the same season by his appearance as Friar Laurence in *Romeo and Juliet*, again proved his talent for presenting a variety of characters by playing the part of Louis XIV, while Elena Illuyshchenko, Lady Capulet in the other new ballet, was Marie Antoinette.

Moscow ballet audiences, however, remained much colder to this scene than their guests, for the simple reason that a very high standard of performance cannot surprise them. What was observed by exacting critics was the abundance of plain mime, particularly in the first act, and the looseness of the story as far as the plot was concerned. *Flame of Paris*—in itself a definite landmark in Soviet Ballet—now came after *Romeo and Juliet*, decidedly a new stage in the art of choreography, and that was the drawback of the revival. Incidentally, the Bolshoi management put on the ballet as an ordinary performance without trying to attach any particular importance to the revival.

And then another interesting phenomenon happened. The audiences liked the ballet, and in spite of its drawbacks of composition, it still remained a heroic, inspiring spectacle, thoroughly deserving the Stalin Prize which fell to it in the spring. The success of the ballet was also due to the excellent cast. Again we saw Lepeshinskaya and Yermolayev as ten years ago. I would say that Lepeshinskaya has improved if anything. Her variations, particularly in the *divertissement* of the last act, are truly dazzling. Alexei Yermolayev has become somewhat thicker set and has been suffering from a leg injury for years; yet his equal can still hardly be found as far as real, masculine, "heroic" style of dancing is concerned. Those who saw his unforgettable appearance as Vayu, the God of Wind, in the old-fashioned little ballet *Talisman*

VAKHTANG CHABUKIANI IN "THE HEART OF THE HILLS"

GALINA ULANOVA IN "GISELLE", ACT 2

twenty-two years ago for the graduation performance of the Leningrad School of Choreography, know that he was endowed by nature with an even greater elevation than we were able to see last winter, but it is always a great joy to see him dance—the manliest *premier danseur* of the ballet stage.

One regretted the absence of Marina Semyonova, who used to dance the part of Mereille de Poitiers, dancer of the court ballet, joining her fate with that of the Revolution. Semyonova was not excelled either by Golovkina or Lopukhina, who took the role this time.

The second cast was also admirable, and it was a great pleasure to hear that Asaf Messerer had become a Stalin Prize winner. The senior classical *danseur* amongst the Soviet generation of dancers, it was Messerer who paved the way to the present status of the Moscow Ballet. A first class dancer possessing marvellous elevation, he has also had no small influence on the development of many dancers, including his sister Shulamith (also Stalin Prize winner for this ballet), Maya Plesetskaya, his niece, and Irina Tikhomirnova, whom he partnered in *Flame of Paris*. It should also be recorded that since his memorable appearance in the Ribbon Dance from *The Red Poppy*, Messerer has played a leading part in the building up of the reputation of the Moscow Ballet.

Such was the memorable winter season with its galaxy of mature stars. The real climax came, however, in the spring, with the début of two young and promising talents. I have in mind the appearance of Maya Plesetskaya in *Swan Lake*, and Raisa Struchkova in *Cinderella*.

Only that which is developing and growing from within is going to endure the test of time, says a wise maxim. The outburst of brilliant young dancers both in Moscow and Leningrad this year is a proof that Soviet Ballet is facing new vistas. The influx of new talent into the old art opens up a fecund vein, promising a safe succession to the present generation of dancers.

Maya Plesetskaya's début fell on April 27th, 1947. She had appeared previously in the leading roles of *Raymonda* and *Casse Noisette* and was no novice. But the part of Odette-Odile served as a final and indisputable examination for maturity as a dancer. As a matter of fact, I shall never again refer to her as "promising"; it would be an insult. Plesetskaya, a true Messerer, always excelled in technique, with her own filigree perfection. In the "white" *pas de deux* from *Swan Lake* she demonstrated a remarkable *aplomb*, reminding one of the old Maryinsky School. I wish more dancers would understand that half the secret of good technique is contained in the spine. (I cannot prevent myself from making a little deviation here on

he subject. In his book on Diaghilev, Serge Lifar erides Anna Pavlova's exercises. He says her exer-ising consisted of standing *sur les pointes* holding the arre, letting it go after she had found the balance, and epeating it over and over again. It is, of course, a pity Pavlova truly limited her exercises to this one, as ifar seems to imply, but as far as the actual exercise escribed is concerned, it was taught to the Maryinsky allerinas by Pierina Legnani and has been successfully sed for the development of *aplomb* by many dancers, ncluding the still living Vera Mosolova, on whose vidence I am retelling this story.) Only perfectly eveloped *aplomb* enables the ballerina to stop dead in n *attitude* after a variation done in any tempo, and this eat, not often seen, is easily performed by Plesetskaya. n the "red" *pas de deux* of the ball scene she included he thirty-two *fouettés*, not infrequently omitted by ther ballerinas, and did them with the utmost ease. lesetskaya has worked hard at the part and many of er latent qualities have come to light in her rendering. he has wonderfully graceful and expressive arms and ands, ever-fluttering like real swan's wings. She roduced an effect of feline softness combined with teel strength. Her elevation is very good, whilst er marvellous extension stands out to best advantage n the graceful costume and lines of the adagio. What s most important, Plesetskaya succeeded in creating hree distinctly different characters in the ballet: the ad, enchanted swan maiden of the second act, the oluptuous, enticing Odile of the third, and the gentle rincess Odette freed from the power of enchantment n the fourth act. Plesetskaya was partnered for her ébut by Vladimir Preobrajensky, a male dancer of lassical figure and extension, and together they made a onderful pair.

Raisa Struchkova appeared as Cinderella shortly efore the close of the season. She was a revelation nd a treat. Her charming, unpremeditated grace ttracted attention long ago in the *pas de trois* from *wan Lake* and the other solo parts she began to receive arlier in the season, but she surpassed all expectations y her rendering of Cinderella, being proclaimed the est of the four at the Bolshoi, which is saying much. ndeed she easily combined Lepeshinskaya's optimism ith Ulanova's ethereal qualities. It is predicted that worthy successor to Ulanova is budding in this young ancer, but even if this is so she will probably develop nto something new, since her scope is wider and echnique admittedly stronger.

Both Plesetskaya's and Struchkova's débuts were rated s entries at the National Contest of young talents in all elds of theatre art held in Moscow last spring. Besides ttending performances by young actors, singers and ancers at their theatres, the jury sat for days at the ctors' Club viewing concerts of young talents gathered r the occasion from all parts of this vast country.

Amongst the new finds of the Contest was Klavdia Chermenskaya of the Sverdlovsk Theatre of Opera and Ballet. The story of her career is very interesting. She graduated from the Saratov Ballet School a few years ago and was content with the good parts she received the very first season. All this went on until Marina Semyonova came on tour to Saratov and appeared in *Swan Lake*. "I saw her for the first time in the third act when we both met in the ballet", says Chermenskaya. "She reigned on the stage. All the rest seemed merely a background". Klavdia Chermenskaya abandoned the Saratov Theatre and went to Moscow—to study at the Moscow School of Choreography as a novice. She never missed a Semyonova ballet in the three years she spent in Moscow. When in 1943 she was invited for *première danseuse* parts to the Sverdlovsk Theatre of Opera and Ballet, one of the best in the country after Moscow and Leningrad, she asked for *Swan Lake* for her début.

Nonna Yastrebova, another successful contestant, is a Leningrad ballerina who graduated in 1941. Of the *petite* type, she possesses a wealth of impish charm and excellent technique. She is considered one of the best Leningrad Auroras and is technically a very strong Kitri in *Don Quixote*. Moreover, she is growing from one performance to another and will doubtless rise to prima ballerina status in the next few years. Nonna Yastrebova had a deserved success at the Prague International Youth Festival.

It is a great pity that this first visit of a large group of Soviet ballet dancers abroad passed unnoticed by the ballet lovers of the world. Though the requirements for participants provided an age limit of thirty, Soviet Ballet was represented by first class dancers and a very well-balanced programme. The entire third act from *The Fountain of Bakchiserai*, with Inna Izraileva as Maria, Alla Shelest as Zarema, and Alexander Lapauri as Khan Girei, was one of the chief items. The third act is the best in this very interesting work by Rostislav Zakharov, Leningrad-trained Moscow choreographer at the head of the ballet delegation. Inna Izraileva is a very gifted lyrical dancer. Only twenty-two, she graduated from the Moscow School of Choreography together with Violetta Prokhorova, but through the vicissitudes of war found herself in Molotov, where she joined the Leningrad Kirov Theatre of Opera and Ballet, which was evacuated to that city. She has danced with great success the part of Odette-Odile and is assured of an excellent career. Her rendering of the part of Maria is very close to that of Ulanova.

Alla Shelest, also a young dancer, was one of the "finds" of the altogether brilliant Leningrad season, the first of its kind after the period of reconstruction following the years of evacuation. Shelest possesses wonderful technique and is very expressive. She had a tremendous success in the new ballet *Spring Tale* or

MARINA SEMYONOVA IN THE ROSE ADAGIO, ACT 1

"THE SLEEPING BEAUTY" AT THE KIROV THEATRE, LENINGRAD, IN HONOUR OF THE 125th ANNIVERSARY OF PETIPA'S BIRT

GALINA ULANOVA AND MIKHAIL GABOVITCH IN "THE AWAKENING", ACT 2, WITH CHERKASOV AND BIEBER AS THE KING AND

MAYA PLESETSKAYA IN "RAYMONDA" AT THE BOLSHOI THEATRE, MOSCOW

(*Left*) K. SERGEYEV AS ALBRECHT IN "GISELLE"

(*Right*) OLGA LEPESHINSKAYA AND V. PREOBRAJENSKY IN A DIVERTISSEMENT, "THE HUNTER AND THE BIRD"

Snowmaiden (arranged by Boris Asafiev from various pieces of Tchaikovsky's music, and therefore called by some "Tchaikovsky's fourth ballet"), and particularly as the Lilac Fairy. At Prague, besides the role of the temperamental Zarema, she danced a classical variation from *Laurencia*, by Vakhtang Chabukiani, who was not present himself but sent two of his best pupils from Tiflis—Vera Zignadze and Zurab Kikaleishvili. The latter (his name is difficult to pronounce even for a Russian) is said to be reminiscent of Chabukiani in his youth, at least as far as the outward effect is concerned. Chabukiani brought this young pair to Leningrad last winter and showed them in the title parts of *Don Quixote*, one of his favourite ballets. The young Georgians were very warmly received by the exacting Leningraders. At the Festival the pair danced the adagio from *The Heart of the Hills* with an authentic national verve.

Chabukiani choreographed *The Heart of the Hills* as a combination of both national and classical steps. This was his first work as a choreographer. His latest work is a Georgian ballet, *Sinatle*, produced at the Tiflis Opera and Ballet Theatre. Chabukiani himself dances the part of Prince Avtandil fighting for Light—"Sinatle" in Georgian. Due to a knee injury, which has incidentally improved considerably in the last year, he does not perform any extreme technical stunts in this ballet, but his technique is still marvellous and his dancing is full of the old *brio* and personality. The music for *Sinatle* was written by a modern Georgian composer, and the sets, reminiscent of colourful Georgian frescoes, are particularly striking. Chabukiani is expected to come to Leningrad early this season to start production of a new ballet, *Othello*, to music by Aram Khacahturian. I have it on very good authority that he might be asked to settle again in Leningrad and become director of the ballet company of the Kirov Theatre. There is no doubt that he would be very welcome; he is an excellent choreographer, with much imagination and no less personality as a dancer. As far as his dancing is concerned, one of his knees is quite well, while treatment of the other is progressing satisfactorily and he will in all probability appear several times during the winter in ballets of his former repertoire.

But to return to Soviet Ballet on tour. Any balletomane would have been happy to see such a star as Olga Lepeshinskaya (though mature as a dancer she is under thirty) in the *pas de deux* from *Don Quixote*, admittedly her best part, or Maya Plesetskaya in the *Swan Lake* adagio with an ensemble of eight swans. Charming Raisa Struchkova danced the adagio from *Cinderella* with Alexander Lapauri, her co-graduate and husband, excellent dancer famed for his "lifts". She also danced the seventh waltz from *Chopiniana* with Yuri Kondratov. There is no doubt that the trip has been a very valuable experience for this youthful ballerina. The programme consisted of many other extracts from Soviet and classical ballets. George Farmaniantz—just one of the good soloists at home—scored a tremendous success with his phenomenal jumps in the *Taras Bulba* variation. Olga Lepeshinskaya proved her manifold talents by appearing in the "Interrogation" scene from the first post-war Soviet ballet *Daughter of the People*. This scene is very well done by Zakharov on the principle of dance-mime. The S.S. officers visibly shrink and tire while Tatiana becomes stronger and stronger. There are no morbid details in the scene which is danced throughout.

In Leningrad the same ballet was produced just before the close of the season under the title of *Tatiana*. Choreographed by Vladimir Burmeister, it differs somewhat from the Moscow version and is very successful in its own way. A ballet about Soviet youth, its cast consists of many young dancers who were produced in abundance last spring by the Leningrad School of Choreography. As a matter of fact, if the future of Ballet is to be considered, the most important event of the Leningrad season was the graduation performance of the School. For the first time since 1928, when Ulanova, Dudinskaya, Vecheslova, Sergeyev, etc., graduated in one year, Vaganova and Romanova (Ulanova's mother) were able to show several first-class dancers at one time, all capable of performing responsible parts.

Olga Moiseyeva, Vaganova's pupil, is said to be reminiscent of Anna Pavlova. She danced the "apparition" scene from *Bayakerka*. Gyuselle Suleimanova, Romanova's pupil, is a Bashkir girl and a ballerina of exquisite qualities. Unfortunately she has gone to work in the Opera and Ballet Theatre of her own republic. Without any difficulty, Suleimanova danced at the graduation concert both the "white" and the "red" *pas de deux* from *Swan Lake*, the first with K. Shatilov, the second with Boris Bregwadze. The girl-graduates included strong classical dancers such as G. Pirozhnaya, N. Kurgapkina, L. Safronova—all remaining to work in Leningrad—and character dancers such as Shevchenko and Semanova. There was an equally high level among the male graduates. The most deserving is Boris Bregwadze. It is he who is most likely to come up to Chabukiani's standard. He started dancing good parts at the Maryinsky before his actual graduation. The interesting feature about Bregwadze is that his studies at the School were interrupted by the war and he returned to finish them, having received many decorations. He was among the Soviet Ballet delegates at Prague. There were several excellent young dancers in the upper class in 1947, including Konstantin Shatilov, who had already danced with success the part of Vatzlav in *The Fountain of Bakchiserai*, and a promising character

dancer, Yuri Bichkov, said to be of the Andrei Lopokov type, which is to say much. Peter Kuznetzov is a third first-class classical dancer among the graduates. All were taken in to the company of the Maryinsky.

As far as the glamour of the Leningrad season was concerned, its climax naturally came with the Petipa Jubilee performance of *The Sleeping Princess* on May 22nd, 1947. Semyonova, Ulanova and Dudinskaya were the three Auroras, and there was a new set of stars for each act, down to the smallest part. Such an event remains unparalleled in the history of Ballet, and may be compared only to the *Pas de Quatre* appearance in London in 1846.

Scrap-book for 1914 (*continued from page* 4)

"And when it was all over and the curtain fell on the well-known scene, cheers broke out from every part of a densely crowded house. Again and again the curtain was raised, and the tributes of flowers handed up two at a time from the orchestra became so numerous that all the nuns standing in a row behind held bouquets, floral baskets covered a great part of the stage, and in the centre stood, more than twelve feet high, a gigantic wreath of golden laurel leaves, decorated with the Danish colours, red and white, a gift from Mr. Oswald Stoll. Among the other tributes were flowers from representative Danish residents in London, an enormous basket of hydrangeas from the Duke of Newcastle, a statuette of the dancer by Mr. J. Davidson, and many baskets and bouquets from the directors and staff of the Coliseum, Mr. Arthur Croxton, the manager, and numerous other admirers. When all the flowers had been handed over the footlights and the audience had sung 'For she's a jolly good fellow', there were loud calls for a speech. Confessing that 'speaking is not in my repertoire', Mlle. Genée made, nevertheless, a very happy response. 'As a child', she said, 'I always remember being told that I was never to speak with my mouth full. My heart is in my mouth now, so that all I can say is: "Thank you, and God bless you".' "

These twin archival items appear to constitute an epoch-making milestone in the annals of ballet.

It is, fortunately for us, unnecessary to ask "Where is that Genée now?" Her former terpsichorean liveliness has given place to a remarkable administrative activity. And she still continues to earn "affection and enthusiasm" inspired by gratitude on the part of those who know so well what she had achieved in elevating the status of her art and in improving the material conditions prevailing in the world of ballet.

OLGA KIRILLOVA, LENINGRAD BALLERINA, AS ODETTE IN "SWAN LAKE"

THE REST OF BALLET RUSSE

With Sketches by GUY SHEPPARD

THE most disappointing aspect of the two new ballets presented by the Original Ballet Russe at the end of their Covent Garden season was their failure to discount the inefficiency of the performances of the older ballets. Had there emerged a choreographer capable of exploiting the native talents of the company in a manner which could have warranted its existence as a living body, instead of one subsisting entirely on past creations, one would have considered it compensation for some of the performances of the latter which were permitted.

The fact that in both *Silver Birch* and *Piccoli* Boris Kniaseff shows considerable facility for inventing interesting movement to exploit individual dancers suggests that, given some artistic guidance such as a Diaghilev would have provided, he might have produced two noteworthy ballets. Apart from their choreography, both ballets collapse from inexpertly selected décor and music, and it was more than a little disturbing to find the can-can from *La Boutique Fantasque* included amongst the Rossini compositions orchestrated for *Piccoli*. These matters do not rest solely with the choreographer: he should always be the master builder in the construction of any new work, but the artistic direction of the company presenting it must take part of the responsibility.

Silver Birch, first presented on September 11th, is a re-working of Kniaseff's *Biroska*, which was created over twelve years ago and performed here by the Woizikovsky company in 1935, while a similar theme was used by Lydia Sokolova for Allied Ballets in 1942. Why choreographers are so fascinated with themes which require dancers to impersonate elements and vegetation has always been beyond my understanding. Ivanov did at least turn his Swan into a princess before she began to dance, but Kniaseff presents his dancers simply as a silver birch, earth and winds. In this guise they are not surprisingly unconvincing, and they are further hampered by the rather sentimental Tchaikovsky music and the banal setting by Monique Lancelot. The costumes, also by Lancelot, perpetrate the horrible mistake of *Les Elfes* in dressing both male and female members of the *corps de ballet* identically. The variations for at least two of the winds, Skouratoff and Claus, possess interest, but Kniaseff shows complete lack of imagination in the use of his *corps de ballet*.

Piccoli, on September 12th, indicated that M. Kniaseff has a greater talent for farce than for sentiment. The plot of the ballet (the domestic troubles of M. Piccoli) is handled in almost slapstick fashion, and had there been slightly fewer amorous complications it might have come over well. As it is there is a nice solo for the second Madame Piccoli—interpreted with charm and vivacity by Renée Jeanmaire—and several episodes which drew laughs from the audience. But, again, the compilation of the several elements into one ballet has not been successful. Rossini is too precise a composer to be allied to such broad comedy, and Kniaseff tends to use music with careful exactitude rather than with feeling and freedom. The setting and costumes are by Natalie Gontcharova: personally I find the work of this artist most satisfying when it remains closest to Russia.

The season creaked to its close on September 13th, and to the end works from the pre-war repertoire were being hurled on to the stage with the dancers barely knowing steps and places. That no ballet actually became a rout is a tribute to every one of the dancers concerned; even so it looked once or twice as though chaos was dangerously close to coming again. Apart from *The Good-Humoured Ladies*, which never revived well even with Massine in charge, the ballet which suffered most in production was *Firebird*. This was practically unrecognisable from the moment when the Firebird herself made her entry from the wrong side. (If it is only octogenarian members of the audience like myself who remember these things, then Colonel de Basil had better invite half a dozen of us to reconstruct his ballets for him—we at any rate know where the Polovtsian Chief should be when the curtain rises, to mention only one other discrepancy.) There was little in the choreography of the first scene which was either Fokine or in Fokine's style, and the finale of the third scene, where the Firebird dances everyone into a state of exhaustion, was only equalled in puerility by the "orgy" in *Schéhérazade*, which consisted in the main of a self-conscious adjustment of brassières by the negroes. One suspects that about one in six of the *corps de ballet* actually knew what he was supposed to be doing, and the others kept one glassy eye on these key men and followed half a beat behind.

Strangely enough the ballet which came off best was *Symphonie Fantastique*. No better reproduced than most of the others, its essential grandeur defied all shortcomings. How one missed Massine, Verchinina (whose part, as danced by Moulin, no longer even seems to exist), Shabelevsky and, above all, Toumanova! And in spite of everything, what a mountain peak of a ballet it showed itself to be!

If proof were needed of the low standard of male dancing expected in this country it would have come with the ovation which greeted Dokoudovsky's shoddy Bluebird. A year's hard work would transform this

performance, which has splendid moments; but isolated moments do not make a Bluebird. For the sake of his rebound from an *assemblée*, for example, one could forgive his slovenly arms, soft feet or broad grin, but not all three in conjunction. Yet the audience's response to Nicolas Orlov's Drummer and Innocent Ivan, which brought back the almost lost art of great Russian character dancing, was a hopeful sign that the genuine thing still has the power to excite and may one day again be demanded as a right instead of looked upon as a phenomenon.

P.W.M

SADLER'S WELLS THEATRE BALLET

By MARY CLARKE

THE production of Ashton's *Valses Nobles et Sentimentales* by the Sadler's Wells Theatre Ballet gives the company the inestimable benefit of working under a great choreographer, and it is encouraging to see the young dancers respond by dancing better than they have ever done before. Sophie Fedorovitch helps them, too, by creating costumes of sufficient dignity and style to quieten occasional teen-age exuberance, but, although in the face of this notable advancement and achievement one hesitates to cavil, all is not well.

To the rather languorous and haunting waltzes of Ravel, Ashton has created pure dancing of enormous invention and consistent beauty which Fedorovitch has enclosed in a simple set of transparent claret-coloured screens against a light backcloth patterned by the shadows of palm leaves. It suggests a brand-new annexe to a ballroom where a group of young people, all dressed in varying tones of claret, come to dance together.

There are no set numbers (and only one moment where even a badly behaved audience can indulge in applause) since the flow of movement is continuous and, as in *Symphonic Variations*, immobile figures are used actively in the design of the ballet. Again and again one's breath is caught by the ingenuity of an *enchainement* or the charm of a group and yet the cumulative effect is not exhilarating but oddly enervating. There is no clear change in either the mood of the ballet or in the lighting until right at the end, and the very consistency of invention in the choreography leads towards tedium when it is pursued continually upon the same plane. Possibly more experienced dancers of stronger personality could have infused more variety into the performance and probably, in this kind of ballet, Ashton would have been happier creating for dancers with whom he had worked over a period of years, but it is the choreographer's misfortune that his work can only be judged by the results he obtains from his actual protagonists, and in this case variety is indubitably lacking.

Certainly the ballet is well rehearsed and well danced, particularly by Anne Heaton, Donald Britton and Michael Boulton, and certainly its production will benefit the Theatre Ballet. If this company is to remain an independent unit and to develop any individuality of its own it must be allowed to work with established as well as aspiring choreographers, for young dancers can hardly be expected to follow the gropings of an inexperienced creator unless they have had practice in following a maturer mind.

At this time of writing, two other new items had been added to the Theatre Ballet's repertoire. *Tritsch-Tratsch*, by John Cranko, is a *pas de trois* to the Strauss polka that almost every ballet group has at some time utilised for a sure-fire success. Play that music, dress your dancers in gay costumes, keep them on the move—and resounding applause will be yours. The present version lifts the roof at Sadler's Wells at every performance and, danced as well as it is by Donald Britton, David Poole and Elaine Fifield, would stop a Palladium show twice nightly. Incidentally, if the standard of dancing in British musicals was not so pitifully low, we should not get so much of this kind of thing on the ballet stage.

The *pas de trois* from *Le Lac des Cygnes* (or just "*Lac*" as the bills succintly put it) serves to display the charm and ebullience of Nadia Nerina, the quiet dignity of Anne Heaton and the careless yet still remarkable elevation of Leo Kersley in a somewhat circusy production.

DONALD BRITTON, ANNE HEATON AND MICHAEL BOULTON IN "VALSES NOBLES ET SENTIMENTALES"

Photograph by Angus McBean

hotograph by Helga Sharland

NADIA NERINA, WHO IS NOW WITH THE PARENT COMPANY, AS COLUMBINE IN "CARNAVAL"

Photograph by Gordon Anthony

PAULINE WADSWORTH, LEO KERSLEY AND ANNE HEATON IN THE PAS DE TROIS FROM "LE LAC DES CYGNES"

adler's Wells Ballet in Prague (*continued from page* 12)

his ballet was not popular; nor was the other example f Leslie Hurry's work which we saw—the setting for *wan Lake.*

The Rake's Progress is a ballet which, perhaps, will ever be quite so popular in Prague as it is in London. t is essentially *English*, and for us, at a first visit at any ate, somewhat confusing. Some of the scenes are ather long, and one's general impression was that he ballet would greatly improve if condensed. The eception was in general rather mixed, but the ballet vas invariably considered interesting with some fine ouches. Julia Farron gave a fine performance as the oung Girl. *Les Patineurs* and *Nocturne* were both well eceived, the former being considered a particularly uccessful trifle.

The *grand pas de deux* from *The Sleeping Princess* was eautifully danced by Margot Fonteyn and Michael omes. Quite obviously you have in Margot Fonteyn ne of the world's really great ballerinas. Although we annot forget the amazing technical virtuosity of epeshinskaya, Fonteyn has a noble bearing, grace nd warmth which were more pleasing to us than the ron-hard technical perfection of Lepeshinskaya.

To sum up on points of comparison, it seems that ne can say in fairness to both the Moscow classical company, and the Sadler's Wells company, that although the Moscow company were in some respect technically stronger, their technique was in style much "harder" and, to those not used to it, unpleasant when compared with the freer, more relaxed technique of Sadler's Wells. The Russian company had unattractive mannerisms (notably of the hands and arms) which gave an effect of machine-like dancing, which was absent in the greater ease of movement of the Sadler's Wells company. On the other hand, technically the English dancers require more polish—*arabesques* must be firmer, and *jétés* by more than one dancer look ragged unless exact attention is paid to the music. Many of these matters could be discussed, but they will doubtless be gradually eliminated by steady training.

In conclusion, may I finish on a note of warmest praise? Many, if not all, of Prague's many dancers, critics and ballet personalities, have been afforded facilities, both official and unofficial, for meeting your dancers. All are unanimous in their appreciation of the friendly, cheerful and generous natures of your dancers. Tomorrow, when they have left, there will be just as many friends as admirers here who will be looking forward to the next Sadler's Wells ballet season in Prague.

JINDRA VODIČKOVÁ.

RUTHANNA BORIS AND LEON DANIELIAN, WITH PATRICIA WILDE AND FRANK HOBI IN "CIRQUE DE DEUX", A NEW BALLET BY RUTHANNA BORIS FOR BALLET RUSSE DE MONTE CARLO

ALEXANDRA DANILOVA AND FREDERIC FRANKLIN OF BALL RUSSE DE MONTE CARLO

FOUR PICTURES FROM AMERICA

ALICIA ALONSO AND IGOR YOUSKEVITCH IN BALLET THEATRE'S "GISELLE"

Photograph by Dwight Godwin-Windmann

NORA KAYE AND HUGH LAING IN "PRINCESS AURORA", BALLE THEATRE VERSION OF "AURORA'S WEDDING"

Photograph by Alfredo Valente

"THE LITTLE BALLERINA"

THE Little Ballerina was made by Gaumont-British Instructional Ltd. for "Children's Entertainment Films" and entertainment seems to have won hands down over instruction. The film was enthusiastically and vociferously received by the children on its Saturday morning showing at my local Odeon, but I am afraid they were vastly more impressed by a race against time on roller skates than by the young heroine's single-minded pursuit of a ballet career!

That is the film's biggest failure: it does nothing to suggest why the child should care so passionately about her dancing or to indicate that she has years of toil and probably disappointment to endure before she can even glimpse her reward. If an accurate picture of ballet training was not to be given, the directors might have concentrated upon providing the poorer children, who largely comprise the Saturday club audiences, with some sight of England's prima ballerina. But Margot Fonteyn dances only one brief solo and a fragment of *Les Sylphides* while she spends the rest of the film judging auditions and arranging charity matinées in a most un-Fonteynlike manner—which is both wasteful of her talents and (since she appears in the film under her own name) misleading.

The actual story of a child dancer who battles against the intrigues of her rivals to win fame at her first public appearance is told effectively, however, and has the appeal of a good school story. The ballet sequence of *Les Sylphides* (danced by Fonteyn and Somes) is well photographed, and the fact that *The Little Ballerina* as a whole was so well received by its rather tough and totally uninhibited juvenile audience indicates that the youth of England are now prepared to take ballet seriously on the screen. It is to be hoped that before long a film will be produced for them which will be instructive, entertaining *and* inspiring and which will capture the native tradition of English ballet as *La Mort du Cygne* preserved the very atmosphere of the Paris Opera.

M. C.

A STILL OF THE "LES SYLPHIDES" SEQUENCE IN "THE LITTLE BALLERINA"

SONIA AROVA AS AURORA IN "THE LOVERS' GALLERY"

A NEW BALLET BY FRANK STAFF

By ALAN STOREY

HITHERTO Mr. Staff has evaded full responsibility as a choreographer with an aplomb which defies criticism and holds judgment at bay. His work is distinguished by the qualities of a first-class cartoon or a preparatory sketch, namely economy of means, individuality of expression and a proper disregard for the portentous. The two Czerny ballets, for instance, together with *Peter and the Wolf*, are unmistakably the efforts of a young man—clever, occasionally brilliant, derivative, and, above all, full of promise.

For the most part, unfortunately, that promise remains unfulfilled in *The Lovers' Gallery*, Mr. Staff's new work for the Metropolitan Ballet Company. Economy of means and individuality of expression are present, it is true; moreover, it is possible to detect an assurance, particularly in the handling of groups, which was not there before. But the feeling prevalent throughout is one of frustrated development, of a disparity between the conception of the theme and its execution; though how much of this is due to Mr. Staff and how much to George Kirsta is difficult to determine.

Mr. Kirsta has set his theme in an Art Gallery in the Vienna of 1889. The story is concerned with two lovers, an Officer and a girl, who contrive to hide themselves in the gallery until after closing time. During the night that follows certain portraits come to life and separate the young couple. The Officer is seduced by a Nymph and the young girl by an Oriental potentate; a situation which is further involved by the interference of Amor and an elderly philosopher and resolved finally by the appearance of Aurora. So far, so good! In essentials it is the familiar Pygmalion-Coppélia theme beloved of choreographers throughout

the history of Ballet. Mr. Kirsta has added distinction to a semi-Baroque setting which gives the illusion of great depth; by the ingenious use of portraits which slide away to reveal their living prototypes; and by costumes which subtly suggest the period, yet allow their wearers complete freedom of movement. At this point, however, some doubt appears to have crept into the minds of artist and choreographer as to whether the best treatment of the theme should be romantic, comic or satirical. And, unable apparently to arrive at a satisfactory conclusion, they have made it all three. The result is an imperfect reconciliation of three opposed choreographic styles.

The opening scene, the gallery at closing time, is perhaps the best of all. The grotesque movements of the attendants, the silly, chattering antics of the female visitors, the inquisitiveness of the awful child and the snob-like pretentiousness of the connoisseur are reminiscent of *La Boutique Fantasque*. They are comic-strip characters and, like their predecessors in *Peter and the Wolf*, give one the impression of being cut out of bright, shiny paper; but, following Massine's example, Mr. Staff fills the stage with an exhilarating flush of incident conceived entirely in terms of the dance.

The movements of the lovers in this scene and in the deserted gallery derive equally from the modern symphonic school and from Mr. Ashton and, as such, are mostly uninteresting. The appearance of the nymph, portrayed as a cover-girl obscured by a repellent grin, and her seduction of the Officer is the signal for another change of style—to the satirical. In his best *Czernyana* manner Mr. Staff turns on the former *pas de deux* and proceeds to turn it inside-out. Burlesque and satire go hand in hand from now onwards; Miss Celia Franca, as the young girl, becomes a somnambulistic zany under the influence of the Oriental potentate; Amor and the philosopher make perfunctory appearances—the former to perform a delightful skit in the dance of the temptress in *Le Fils Prodigue* with Aurora's horses—and finally, Aurora herself, danced by Miss Sonia Arova, to do for the classical ballet what Mr. Bruhn and Miss Blake had previously done for the neo-romantic.

Mr. Lennox Berkeley's *Divertimento in B Flat* provided the necessary rhythms, but otherwise amused itself in its own delicate, tasteful and witty manner.

Balletomanes' Bookshelf

BALLET THEN AND NOW. A History of the Ballet in Europe. By Deryck Lynham. (Sylvan Press, 5s. net.)

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(*Continued on next page*)

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(*Balletomanes' Bookshelf, continued from previous page*)
period from 63 B.C. to the present day. Naturally, in a book of 214 pages which include about 40 pages of appendices, there is no room for enlargement on any particular period, but its value as a work of reference can hardly be over-estimated. Here, in one extremely well-produced and beautifully illustrated volume, are to be found most of the innumerable facts which have hitherto had to be sought in dozens of different works. That Mr. Lynham's style does not illuminate his matter is a pity, but in so closely-packed a volume this is probably inevitable. It is not perhaps a book that can be read straight through with pleasure, but it is good for innumerable "dippings" for years to come.

DANCE : 100 PHOTOGRAPHS BY SERGE LIDO. (Published by Masques of Paris and distributed in this country by the Alliance Press Group, 137 Cannon Street, London, E.C.4. 10s. 6d. net.)

This is a sharp reminder from Paris that they do these things better in France. Doubtful as I am as to the value (except historically) of books of photographs of dancers either on stage, back-stage or away from the stage, I have to admit that I find this one endlessly fascinating. Most of the photographs are of members of the Ballet des Champs-Elysées, the Paris Opera or dancers whom we saw last year with the Nouveau Ballet de Monte Carlo, including the great Chauviré, and a criticism might be that there are a few more

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nan enough of Lifar; but there are also some pre-war ictures of Massine and his company which revive nemories, and one sad and wonderful one of Nijinsky s he is today. These photographs seem to me incom-arably more alive than anything we get from our own hotographers. The English translation of the French ext provides even more than the usual amount of uiet fun.

)ANCE, ART, BEAUTY. (Distributed in England y Anglo-French Periodicals, 25 Villiers Street, ondon, W.C.2. 10s. net.)

This is the first issue of a new French quarterly, rinted in English. This also is produced in a manner vhich seems almost impossible over here. Chief nterest centres around C. W. Beaumont's fine Tribute o Fokine, illustrated in such a way as to bring home his niquely many-sided genius, and Pierre Tugal's One)ynasty of Dancers with the colour prints of Taglioni allets. Beautifully composed as this magazine is, it romises more at a first glance than it gives on closer xamination. Illustrious names author many of the rticles, but the articles manage to say remarkably ttle, and even so devoted an admirer of Jean-Louis arrault as myself has to confess bafflement as to what oint he thinks he is making in his The Mime and he Dance. P.W.M.

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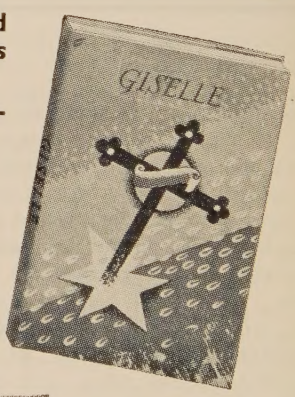

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